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United for Quality Care

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Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Committee. My name is Mary Breton and I have been a Certified Nurses Aide for 34 years. I am currently working on the second shift at Davis Place in Danielson. I am here today because even with the funding help that you gave last year, the State is in a state of crisis. I have never seen staffing shortages like what we are experiencing right now. There are nights where I am caring for 32-34 residents all by myself, and at least 25% of them require a two person assist. I am expected to provide 3 rounds of care, dinner, and do my charting before the end of my shift. How am I to transfer a resident from their wheelchair to their bed with a mechanical lift that by law, requires 2 people to operate? I have to interrupt the Nurse while he/she is concentrating on medications to ask for assistance.

Over the years, we have seen a major change in our resident clientele. We are no longer mainly caring for the elderly. We now have residents who come straight from the hospital, who need more attention and care because they are sicker with more acute illness. I sometimes wonder how they were even discharged from the hospital because we cannot accommodate their needs. As they recover and heal they need rehabilitation services, such as physical therapy. We are seeing more residents come in with substance abuse issues, psychiatric issues, residents who are mentally challenged, and some are even there because they are homeless. They all have their own unique forms of care. We have had no additional training or in-services on these types of challenging residents. We receive our minimal annual in-services and we are just expected to get the job done. I used to work for the Department of Developmental Services so I know how challenging these residents can be, but we used to receive so much training there that we knew what to do.

The patient to staff ratios have not changed nor the monies increased to help fix these issues, not even during the consideration of Covid-19. As a result, you have shortages across the board in the State, in every department. For example, Environmental Services, such as Housekeeping and Laundry: we have had to cut back on staffing, leaving no one on second shift. How can we keep up with Infection Control, especially disinfection and sanitizing to prevent Covid-19 when we barely have enough staff to do that? Nursing Supervisors have had to run downstairs to throw in a load of towels & washcloths so that we have some to provide resident care.

At my facility, I also help with training & mentoring the Student CNAs. I do this with no extra compensation, to help guide our future CNAs. Unfortunately, after their training is over and they pass their tests, they leave our facility to go work at another facility or through a pool agency where they can make more money. We will not be able to staff our facilities with committed consistent staff, if we do not have the funding to do so. We really need to consider the up and coming Baby Boomer Generation. What will happen to all of them if there is no one to care for them? What will happen if we continue to diminish the infrastructure that is needed to expand for their care?

Thank you for your time